DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATE OF GEORGIA

SUMMARY OF MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: December 6, 2016, 5:00PM

LOCATION: Antioch Baptist Church North "590 Building," 590 North Avenue NW, Atlanta, GA 30354

STUDY TEAM: Sam Samu, GDOT
Paul DeNard, GDOT
Chip Burger, AECOM
Jonathan DiGioia, AECOM
Allie Velleca, AECOM
John Hightower, AECOM
Carly Queen, AECOM
Scott Younker, AECOM

CAC MEMBERS: Angel Poventud, Adair Park/CSX
Andrew McBurney, MARTA
Tony Zivalich, Georgia Tech Real Estate
Chris Downing, Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute
Sheri Davis-Faulkner, Westside Communities Alliance
Chad Meyer, Atlantic Capital Properties
Antonio Jackson, Georgia World Congress Center P.D.
Erik Waldman, Georgia World Congress Center Authority
Sally Flocks, PEDS
Bob Jones, Bethursday Development

DISCUSSION: **CAC Meeting #2, Segment 3 for SR 3/ Northside Drive, GDOT PI 0007557, City of Atlanta, Georgia**

The second Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting for segment 3 (south of Marietta Street, north of Mitchell Street) of the Northside Drive Corridor Improvement Study was held with the above listed participants on December 6, 2016 at 5:00PM in the 590 Building at Antioch Baptist Church North, 590 North Avenue NW, Atlanta, GA 30354. This meeting was held to review the progress of the Northside Drive Corridor Improvement Study and collect further input from CAC members regarding potential improvement opportunities to address the needs of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the community. The study team presented a summary of the study and CAC process to date then led the CAC members in a guided discussion of potential improvement options along segment 3 of the Northside Drive study corridor.

Sam Samu began by welcoming the attendees and inviting the CAC members and study team members to introduce themselves.

Chip Burger kicked off the presentation portion of the meeting, which highlighted input from the first round of CAC meetings and the work done so far by the study team to identify potential improvement options based on CAC input and engineering data.

During the presentation, a CAC member asked for clarification about the meaning of the pedestrian count numbers. **Jonathan DiGioia** responded that some of the values were 4-hour count averages, while others were 12-hour count averages.

A CAC member made a comment about hawk signals and asked about the movements through the 14th Street and Hemphill Avenue intersection.

Following the presentation, **Jonathan DiGioia** and **Carly Queen** presented results from the study team's data collection efforts, including traffic and crash data.

During the data collection presentation, a CAC member made a statement about injuries at Joseph E. Boone Boulevard being related to higher rates of speed and crashes with pedestrians and cyclists. A CAC member asked what the injury rates shown on the data boards represented. **Carly Queen** responded that the numbers shown on the boards represented the ratio of injury rates at each intersection compared with the average injury rate of crashes along the entire Northside Drive study corridor. Injury rates were only shown for intersections with injury rates greater than or equal to 150% the average corridor-wide injury rate.

The CAC member also made a statement about the Level of Service (LOS) data shown on the traffic maps—that LOS "C" or "D" are preferred, and while LOS "A" sounds good, it is not necessary for urban areas. A CAC member also asked if the 2038 traffic projections account for changes in signal timing. **Scott Younker** responded that these models assumed optimal traffic signal timing. A CAC member posed the question, "Optimized for who?"

A CAC member made a statement about development growth being included as well. Another CAC member stated there are lots of opportunities for growth and maybe the regional average does not capture it for this segment. **Scott Younker** stated the growth rate assumptions (0.6% until 2018 and 1.4% through 2038) and noted that the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) growth rates are used in the regional model. Some people nodded in agreement that the traffic projections growth development rates seem realistic for the development opportunities in this corridor.

Before discussing improvement options at specific locations, a CAC member asked what LOS assumptions were used for the lane call suggestions on the roll plots. **Jonathan DiGioia** responded that the lane call suggestions are based on several high-level assumptions including intersection density and other factors and that these are used as a high level planning tool but do not determine outright what will be built on the corridor. A CAC member asked to clarify if the lane call results shown were only for cars (not transit, bikes, etc.). **Jonathan DiGioia** clarified that the lane call analysis was only for cars.

Following the data collection discussion, **Jonathan DiGioia** facilitated an in-depth group discussion of potential improvement options along segment 3 of the Northside Drive study corridor. The following is a summary of that discussion:

General Typical Section and Speed Discussion

- Twelve foot lanes are too wide. Why are they shown at this width in the typical section?
  - Response given by the study team: outside lanes are usually wider for buses and freight
  - Twelve feet is the lane width for 70-mile-per-hour interstates. Even interstates in Atlanta use 11' lanes in some areas. Peachtree Road in Buckhead (also a state route) uses 10' lanes.
  - Medians help; wider medians are better.
  - Compare safety of roads with 4-lane vs. 6-lane cross-sections in Florida; crash rates are double for all users on 6-lane roads.
  - Pedestrians are more likely to be hit when crossing the third out of three lanes in a single direction, which is due to the increased exposure time of crossing an additional lane.
  - A 4-lane cross-section is typically more conducive to walking and safety, but a 6-lane section in which two of the lanes were bus lanes could also be safe if the bus lanes are well-designed.
- LOS is not much better with 6 lanes.
- Length of delay is a bit longer.
- What speed does GDOT want?
  - Response given by Sam Samu of GDOT: what speed do the CAC members think is appropriate?
  - The group agreed that 30 mph was a sufficient design speed to accommodate all users
  - State law is 30 mph speed limits in urban residential areas unless otherwise posted. Pedestrians struck at 40mph have 15% of survival, whereas pedestrians struck at 30 mph have significantly better odds.
  - I like 30mph here and I travel 20 mph in the neighborhoods.
  - Northside Drive feels like a super-highway at night.
  - 30mph on the segment supports development, and faster speeds allow Northside Drive to continue to be a river to separate east from west.
- The focus on bringing tourism and community amenities to the area is good, but they are not very useful to the community if a mom with a stroller cannot safely, easily, and comfortably cross Northside Drive to access them.
- Slower, safe refuge median where needed
- Don't worry about peak hour traffic so much… people adjust their travel patterns to different routes and times of day and people can choose alternate options, transit, etc.
- For vehicular traffic: "Don't design for worst-case scenario"

Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway Intersection

- The Bankhead Avenue Bridge is on the Renew Atlanta bond program list for demolition, but several individuals and organizations are writing letters to ask for its restoration instead as a bike/ped connection across the railroad tracks.
- Georgia Tech is particularly interested in creating a bike/ped connection across the Bankhead Avenue Bridge, because it would form a better connection from the main campus to both the North Avenue research area and the Technology Enterprise Park area.
- Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway between Northside Drive and Marietta Boulevard should be re-paved with one travel lane in each direction separated by a shared left-turn with bike lanes on the outside; this would be an improvement over the existing cross-section, which includes four narrow lanes and no left-turn lanes or bike lanes. The existing configuration is statistically the most dangerous type of cross-section, and the traffic volumes are low enough for a road diet.
- This part of the corridor should be designed for significant future bike/ped traffic.
- There aren't many pedestrian crossings now, but there may be more in the future.

- People riding bikes from the Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway area typically do not cross Northside Drive at Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway then make a left onto Marietta Street to access the Marietta Street business district; they typically use the west sidewalk along Northside Drive to get to the business district.
- The 4-lane roundabout concept at Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway appears to require a lot of right-of-way—can it be narrowed down to be more efficient?
    - Discussion of traffic signal versus roundabout
    - How does a roundabout compare to a signalized intersection in terms of traffic flow?
        - Response from the study team: It depends, but roundabouts may outperform conventional signalized intersections if there are high left-turn volumes.
    - The roundabout enhances East-West flow on the side streets.
    - Has the study team researched pedestrian safety and operations in roundabouts?
    - The Emory Village roundabout is safe for pedestrians.
    - A 2-lane roundabout is more challenging for pedestrians and those with disabilities than a 1-lane roundabout.
    - A 2-lane roundabout should have safety features like islands and rapid flash beacons for pedestrians.
    - Does a roundabout make sense here on Northside Drive as it relates to volume and density?
    - Look at Oxford, MS for roundabout examples.
    - Are there 2-lane roundabouts in Georgia?
        - Response from the study team: Yes. One example is on Saint Simons Island, and another is near Kennesaw State University. There are also several others around the state currently being designed or under construction.
- Even if vehicular traffic delays became slightly longer than they currently are, they would still probably be shorter than the 90-second delays pedestrians often experience waiting to cross a signalized intersection simply as a result of the cycle length.

<u>North Avenue Intersection</u>

- Natural roundabout location, right-of-way already in use; would help slow traffic and benefit Northyards area.
- This intersection should be an iconic gateway.
- Get rid of the slip lane.
- Improve bike infrastructure, future bike/ped corridors at Technology Enterprise Park (TEP)/North Avenue Research Area (NARA) with multiple entrances, grid shared by Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA).
- If a roundabout is decided on as a mid- or long-range project at this intersection, consider building the splitter islands first as a short-term project. It would be cheap and easy and help pedestrians in the near-term.
- Extend nose of median island past crosswalk to force people NOT to cut left turns across crosswalks.
- Consider lane markings and signs too.
- Are the North Avenue westbound dual lefts needed? Buses turn left here. Even though it was recently re-striped to include only a single left-turn lane and a dedicated through lane, people still treat the through lane as a shared left-through like it was before.
- Double green lights protect the pedestrians.

<u>North Avenue at Northyards Boulevard and Railroad/Marietta Street Underpass</u>

- Destination feel at overhead rail bridges would increase pedestrian traffic.
- Traffic study to see if North Avenue could be put on a road diet?

- What if only one whole side of North Avenue under the railroad bridges was used for bikes/peds? Or should we still leave sidewalk on both sides?
    - Expecting pedestrians to use only one side of the street will not work and is less safe.
- The pedestrian crossing conditions should be improved at the intersection of Northyards Boulevard and North Avenue. Pedestrians already cross here between the Georgia Tech research facility and Northyards Boulevard, and the number of pedestrian crossings here is only expected to increase in the future as Georgia Tech builds out this part of its campus.
- Like the existing paths connecting North Avenue and Marietta Street.
- This area would be ideal for place-making treatments.
- Do traffic study, it is important for Georgia Tech and should extend west to cover neighborhood impacts.
- Pedestrian improvements are needed at Northyards and C.M. Alexander Boulevard.

Cameron M. Alexander Boulevard Intersection

- The Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) is building a 720-unit mixed income housing complex with a grocery store on the east side of Northside Drive between C.M. Alexander Boulevard and John Street.
- Pedestrians currently cross here, but even more bike/ped crossings are expected in the future after AHA builds its new development on the east side of Northside Drive.

Ivan Allen Boulevard/Joseph E Boone Boulevard Intersection

- Bethune Elementary needs a safe crossing.
- Traffic signal is short.
- Transit services are currently accessible here.
- Protect bike lanes and move them away from the street.
- Proposed PATH trail along Ivan Allen/Boone, North/South along Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) property
- Connect to bike paths at Georgia Tech/TEP.
- Like dual lefts
- Like medians – at least six feet for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Need pedestrian crossing at John Street.
- AHA in design phase for property north of John Street.
- Bethursday wants to build a trail similar to New York's High Line along the abandoned railroad corridor they own.
- Would like to see vehicle staging location for rideshare services like Uber, Lyft, and taxis, as well as vehicles dropping off individuals with disabilities, along Northside Drive in front of GWCC. Those vehicles' operators currently choose to stage themselves in the shoulder lane of Northside Drive rather than utilizing the parking lots in the area.
- Recommend 10.5' lanes like on Peachtree Road.
- Considerations should be made for pedestrian refuge islands.
- Island needs to be at least 6 feet wide to function as a pedestrian refuge.
- The Falcons lead the NFL in mass transit use on game days (including in New Jersey). Approximately 30% of patrons use MARTA to get to the Dome.
- We should think outside the box and look into counter flow of roads for event traffic.
- If we build more parking facilities, more people will drive.
- Look at green initiatives with regards to new Dome parking, which is slated to add up to 1,500 new spaces, increasing from 6,500 current spaces to 7,500-8,000 future spaces.
- Mercedes-Benz stadium will seat 75,000.
- Atlanta Planning Commissioner Tim Keane says growth is a reality, the city is expected to more than double its population in the next 35 years, and we won't have room for all those people to drive cars everywhere they go, so we need to plan for that.

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- Increase variable message signage to help with event traffic and wayfinding, incidents, and normal traffic. Example locations include Northside Drive northbound approaching the Joseph Boone Boulevard/Ivan Allen Boulevard intersection.
- Do not use large green or electronic highway signs in an urban area—it sends the message to speed like you are on a highway and takes away from the character of the area.
- Make wayfinding signage along the corridor more consistent and uniform.

MLK Jr Drive & Mitchell Street Intersections

- A bicycle boulevard and road diet is planned on M.L. King Jr.Drive
- Are 6 lanes needed at the stadium with a median? Is this an area we want people to walk?
- More capacity = more drivers
- Consider Beltline transit (streetcar) both here and between North Avenue and Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway.
- Compare typical cross sections with existing conditions.
- Foundry Street and Magnolia Street both used to connect the west side neighborhoods to downtown. These original street connections should be re-created to break up the super-block and connect to International Plaza and Centennial Olympic Park. This will require coordination by the City of Atlanta, GDOT, and GWCC.
- Parking will not be needed as much in the future with ride-sourcing and automated vehicle technologies.
- Re-use space needed for parking today, and provide for flexible future uses.

Top Priorities

- Medians
- Street trees—coordinate with sidewalk placement
- No right-side trap lanes/lane drops; space for buses
- Safe places to drop off for retail/entertainment (on-street parking as a short-term solution)

Chip Burger thanked the attendees for their time and officially concluded the meeting, encouraging attendees to leave behind any further written comments they had before leaving.

Additional Written Comments Received:

- Dobbins, Michael. "Baby Steps across Northside Drive?" *Saporta Report*. 1 Oct. 2016. Web. 22 Dec. 2016.

Action Items:

a. Distribute meeting minutes/meeting summary
b. Schedule CAC Meeting #3
c. GDOT/AECOM→ Further refine improvements
d. CAC→Share feedback with community organizations

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